

**HB 5959 and HB 5804
December 3, 2014**

Statement of Brian Cloyd, Vice President of Global Relations, Steelcase, to Hon. Frank Foster, Chair, Commerce Committee

This statement is offered in support of amending the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to include "sexual orientation and gender identity."

I am Vice President of Global Relations at Steelcase, headquartered in Grand Rapids, Mich. I am also the Chief Diversity Officer and Chief Affirmative Action Officer. Steelcase is a global company, with over 650 dealers and over 10,000 employees worldwide including China, India, and Europe. We are a founding member of the Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition, dedicated to updating the ELCRA to protect the gay and transgender community, and one of a handful of companies to receive a score of 100 on the Human Rights Council's Corporate Equality Index, a survey that evaluates policies and practices concerning LGBT employees

Steelcase puts a high priority on diversity and inclusion, going to great lengths through recruiting and hiring, as well as promoting diversity and urban education within the Grand Rapids community. We believe that our workforce should not only reflect the community in which we are located, but also the community in which we do business.

To have a diverse workforce you need a diverse pool of qualified applicants to choose from. We strive to create a culture of inclusivity by, for example, providing domestic partner benefits as well as other services for the LGBT community. We must break down barriers so that people feel they are working and living in a supportive community and want to be here.

When it comes to moving forward, the hardest issue Grand Rapids faces is its ability to attract and retain diverse populations, especially people of color – because we are still evolving as a community and do not have as broad a base of as other communities do.

The time is now to update our state human rights law -- recognizing that Michigan's work ethic and adherence to ideas of basic fairness and equality have been a cornerstone for our economy, creating jobs, opening opportunities, encouraging investment and supporting families. Updating ELCRA to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity strengthens that cornerstone at the very time Michigan is pushing hardest toward economic recovery. Steelcase knows firsthand that nondiscrimination polices contribute to – rather than undermine – success, competitiveness and growth. We urge the legislature and Governor to take this important step.